



The Christian News-Letter

Edited by
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BLISS

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THE PAST FORTNIGHT has witnessed a series of events, all prompted by the same reason and directed to closely related ends, which must affect the future course of history. In the United States a specially summoned joint-session of Congress met to receive from President Truman a "report on the critical situation in Europe" and a recommendation for the early adoption of universal military training as a means of maintaining military strength and supporting Euro-

pean countries menaced by Communist aggression. On the same day in Brussels the representatives of five western European Powers signed a fifty-year treaty of collective military aid and economic, social and cultural co-operation. A Consultative Council is entrusted with the pursuit of the treaty's aims. On the previous day in Paris the Sixteen-Power Conference concerned with European Recovery took steps for the setting up of a permanent body to promote economic co-operation between them. Earlier in the week, in London, the Prime Minister announced that the Government had decided that in the future no member of the Communist Party, nor any one associated with it in a way to raise legitimate doubts about his or her reliability, would be employed in work vital to the security of the State.

The beginning of closer economic co-operation between the sixteen Powers in Europe offers brighter hopes for the

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economic recovery of the continent than it has been possible up to now to entertain. The still closer association between Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg is the first deliberate combined attempt to defend and to revivify the European tradition. The signatories to the treaty put in the forefront of their aims their resolution "to reaffirm their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the other ideals proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations; to fortify and preserve the principles of democracy, personal freedom and political liberty, the constitutional traditions and the rule of law, which is their common heritage". One of the articles of the treaty commits them to making "every effort in common to lead their peoples towards a better understanding of the principles which form the basis of their common civilization". Here at last is the beginning of the rallying of powerful forces to serve and defend what is of most value in the tradition of Europe.

President Truman referred to the Brussels Treaty as an act of great significance, "not imposed by a more powerful neighbour", but "the free choice of independent governments". What he called for was not just the military defence of Europe (which would be a first step in self-defence); he asked the American people to devote their great resources to helping the nations of Europe in their programme of economic recovery, "which is the *foundation* of our policy of assistance to the free nations of Europe", and in the protection and preservation of European civilization. So far his call has evoked a warm response from the American nation.

It is too early yet for us to be able to tell our readers what are the reactions to this speech in Christian circles in America. The Federal Council of Churches has already published a strong statement in favour of the European Recovery Programme. But so strong are the tides of pacifism in some parts of the Protestant Churches in America that their attitude is either lukewarm or even positively hostile. The American counterpart of the Christian News-

Letter, *Christianity and Crisis*, published by a board of editors of which Reinhold Niebuhr is chairman, has published in its current number a statement of the paper's policy following on a reorganization. On international affairs it takes its stand on support for the European Recovery Programme and for the United Nations and puts them in that order. In an editorial in the same issue Dr. Niebuhr sharply challenges those Christians in the United States who oppose the European Recovery Programme. To those of them who object that some of the supporters of the plan have less than the highest motives, he says, "If Christian perfectionism is going to require pure motives from everyone who may be allied in a common objective, it really ought to renounce politics completely and betake itself to a monastery. If on the other hand it remains in politics it had better begin to worry about the motives of some of the forces with whom it is allied in opposition to the Marshall Plan." To those who oppose it because they fear that it may heighten the tension between Russia and America and make war more likely, he says "actually the plan is the one best hope of avoiding war" and asks how any Christian can think that "a decision which permits Europe to stew in its economic misery and to submit to Communism in its desperation, is in some way related to the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount."

Although there are undoubtedly many in America whose main interest in the European Recovery Programme is whatever security it may afford the United States from Russian threats to dominate, yet it is undeniable that the mainspring of American sentiment in the matter is a desire to defend liberty and some sense of obligation to those nations who fought for their own freedom, and at the same time for every nation's freedom during the war and are now at the end of their resources. It is never easy to express gratitude to the rich, and the British have had few occasions in the past for practising the art, since they have more often played the rôle of rich relation than of poor. They may very well forget to say thank you, out of sheer gaucherie. Perhaps we can through the Christian News-Letter say to its American

readers that most British people are in their inarticulate way deeply grateful to those who have put up such a gallant battle for the European Recovery Programme.

DISMISSAL OF COMMUNISTS

We mentioned in the first paragraph of this News-Letter Mr. Attlee's announcement of the intended removal of members of the Communist Party from posts of critical importance to the nation's security. Few political decisions in a democratic society are more difficult to take than the decision to remove people from their work on account of their political views. On the one hand, it is the height of folly for a democratic society to tolerate the intolerant up to a point where the intolerant capture the going concern themselves, by using the opportunities given them by freedom in order to abolish freedom. On the other hand, everybody who values the British way of life, at the heart of which lies the freedom of every man to express his political opinions, knows that to embark on purges is to set one's feet on a slippery slope. It is all very well to say that Communists are perfectly free to read the *Daily Worker*, to hold political meetings and to express their views in speech and writing. The real point is, as the editor of the *Economist* pointed out in another connection, that if a man is prevented from earning his living at the calling in which he has been trained, outside of which it may prove difficult for him to find a way of earning his living, he is not really free. At present the number of persons involved is very small, and there are no signs of an extension. Yet at a time in our history when our survival depends largely on industrial output the Communist within industry, if he sets out to wreck relationships and to impede production, can endanger the nation's security. When Mr. Douglas Hyde, News Editor of the *Daily Worker*, resigned from his post and from the party and sought entry into the Roman Catholic Church, he said, "I believe that the new 'line' of the Communist Party on production, introduced after the formation of the Cominform last year, and the opposition to the Marshall Plan, from which it springs, would, if successful, bring

nothing but misery to the common people of Britain. It therefore became obvious to me that the movement for which I had fought and worked for so long was destroying those very freedoms and decencies for which it claimed to be fighting."

It is at least possible that dismissals from the civil service may sooner or later have to be followed up by some kind of action within industry, which the Communist Party has always made its main sphere of activity. While this may have to be accepted as a necessary step, if and when it comes, two things are important. First, that our consciences should remain uneasy and aware of the paradox that the free society which has to preserve its life by denying freedom to however small a section of its opponents is in a morally ambiguous position and one from which it must be constantly seeking a way out. It is not just a matter of a few persons having to forfeit their freedom for the sake of all. It is not only those who will have their actions restricted who are affected by steps of this kind. All the rest will be affected too, for once a society has in its midst a small minority declared to be the enemy, then the temptation to identify every failure as the work of this minority is very strong. Anti-Communism could have on the majority some of the same vicious effects as Anti-Semitism. Because they are the enemies of a free society, Communists are not the only enemy, and an anti-Communist campaign would give just the covering they need to persons in our midst who do not give a fig for social justice and are out to make all they can in any way they like. Nothing would do more to increase sympathy with the Communist Party among working men and women than to see an anti-Communist campaign providing such coverage. The second thing necessary, therefore, is a constant attempt to discover the more excellent way with Communists. There is no doubt that there are many in the Communist Party who are deluded idealists, and some who are perplexed and disturbed but are held by loyalty. It is still not too late to exercise persuasion and argument. A part of this must be of the personal kind, but it is equally important that those who never bother to attend trade union meetings, or do a

hand's turn to support any voluntary society or any political party should be roused from their lethargy into a realization that the tree on which they live such a comfortable ivy existence may fall down under them.

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The action which brought the Communists into power in Czechoslovakia was so swift that to most people in this country it came only as a shock. Only now, a month after the event, are attempts being made to understand it in all its aspects. Those who write it off as an exceedingly smart Russian piece of business are underestimating it and closing their minds to some of its lessons. We are able here to summarize some remarks made by a reader of the Christian News-Letter who was in Czechoslovakia at the time and had good opportunities of knowing what was going on. His strongest impression was that this was not a palace affair, a coup cleverly organized by a small clique, but a genuine revolution, having at least some of its roots in causes going back as far as 1920. What has taken place is in his view related both to foreign policy and to internal affairs. He thought that in the discussion of the foreign aspect in the British press too little has been said about Germany. The Czechs have a deep-rooted fear of Germans, which the defeat and devastation of Germany has not removed. Even among well-informed Czechs there were dark suspicions that the British and Americans out of fear of Russian intentions were playing a double game in Germany, and while outwardly they appeared to be doing little to rehabilitate her economic life, they were secretly planning to use German resources against Russia and might, if they had the chance, insist on returning the expelled Sudeten Germans to Czech territory. The importance of this point is not whether the Czechs were right or wrong about British and American intentions, but the fact that their age-long fear of Germany and their expulsion of a million Germans from their own territory predisposed them to believe what we in this country would think of as impossible nonsense. Added to this, a number of Czechs who had been to the United States since the war came back convinced that the Czechs

would have to choose which camp they would be in, the Anglo-Saxon or the Russian, and that the continuance of a bridge between the two was impossible.

On the internal aspect of the revolution our informant laid stress on the fear among the working classes that the policy of nationalization might be halted or in some respects reversed. While allowance must be made for unscrupulous propaganda among the workers, yet it remains true that many of them felt that their interests were safer in the hands of the Communists than in those of the Socialists. One of the most remarkable aspects of the Communist coup was its effect on the Socialist Party. Every day new groups flaked off from the Socialist Party like the strata of a rock and went over to the Communists. The Socialist movement did not seem to have foundations among the workers which would stand firm in the face of determined attack. Now the whole situation is obscure. Outwardly things go on much as usual. But many have lost their jobs, particularly journalists and professional people, and very many more go to bed at night uncertain what their position will be when they get up the next morning. A number of people, including some Christians, have joined the Communist Action Committees, and regard themselves as what they call "savers from the wreck". They hope to act as a brake on violence and as a modifying influence in policy. At present, of course, they provide the Communist regime with an appearance of being broadly based and, for a revolutionary party, tolerant. What will happen to them when their services are no longer needed is a question that is exercising their friends more than it appears to worry them. "We shall overcome this tyranny as we overcame the last," said one man who was taking no part in political affairs, "but it will take longer, years longer."

PALESTINE : A VOICE OF REASON

The forces of unreason and violence seem to-day to be sweeping everything before them and driving the world to its doom. Few voices of reason can be heard above the clamour, and one of the most powerful of them was silenced when Mr. Gandhi was murdered. As we said in commenting

on his last fast, he challenged the deeply rooted assumptions of this power-ridden world. Instead of abusing the world he pled with his own people to act with tolerance and mercy, no matter what injustices they might have suffered or what passion for recrimination might inspire them. In a similar category belongs a courageous pamphlet by Dr. Walter Zander, in which he appeals to his fellow Jews.¹ The situation in Palestine has deteriorated since the pamphlet was written three months ago, but what Dr. Zander says is not thereby made less true. Dr. Zander is among the most distinguished of Jewish émigrés to this country and he is now the secretary in this country of an organization called "The Friends of the Hebrew University".² Writing as a Jew to Jews he says the first thing Jews have to do is to ask themselves how far they have contributed to the difficulties of the present situation. Other nations have also made mistakes, "but there will be no lasting improvement of the situation until each party becomes aware of its own faults in the matter." He takes as his title that of an essay by the great Jewish thinker, Ahad Ha'am, who in 1889 when modern Zionism was just emerging warned the Jews that unless it was based on a "revival of the heart" it would bring untold miseries.

The cardinal problem in the Palestine question, says Dr. Zander, was that the Jews had to build their national home in a country inhabited for hundreds of years by another people. Instead of concentrating all their efforts and creative energies on solving this, the supremely important problem, the Jews have since their first entry into Palestine treated it as a matter of secondary, or even negligible, importance. On all sides nationalism was a rising tide in the Middle East and every European Power with interests there had to reckon with it. The Jews alone remained blind to Arab national feeling and so opposition to the Jewish national home "has grown solid and undivided from Morocco to the Indian border". But far beyond this, in the eyes of the peoples of Asia and Africa as a whole the

¹ *Is this the Way?* Victor Gollancz, 1s.

² Palestine House, Manchester Square, London, W.C. 1.

Jewish national home, backed as it was by British power, has appeared as a glaring example of imperialism against which they are in revolt. Not only the Moslem League and Pakistan, but the Congress Party and India have given their support to the Arab case. The lamentable failure of Jewish leaders to recognize the real situation in time has made a settlement with the Arabs nearly impossible.

In a similar spirit Dr. Zander discusses the relations of the Jews with the British. There have been faults on the British side, which he notes but does not discuss. It is with the faults of his own side that he is concerned. "The thirty-year-long history of Jewish-British relations since the Balfour Declaration suffered from the very beginning from a fateful ambiguity, for which, I feel, a large share of responsibility rests with us." The aim of the Jewish leaders in the negotiations which began in 1917 was the establishment of a Jewish State, and they asked for the "re-establishment of Palestine as the Jewish National Home". The British Government in view of its responsibilities towards the Arabs could not concede this. What the Balfour Declaration offered was "the establishment of a Jewish National Home *in* Palestine". This was something essentially different, but the Jewish leaders ignored the vital difference in their propaganda and allowed expectations to grow up, the non-fulfilment of which was bound to arouse fierce resentment. "Here, as in the Arab case, we chose again the cheap and easy way of an ostrich policy, and pretended that the problem which we had to solve did not exist."

Now the National Home is in peril. For thirty years it was virtually a part of the British Empire and protected as such: military success will count for little with a hostile world on every side. But the greatest peril comes from within, from the dragon's teeth of terrorism and the abdication of Zionist leadership. If partition were to come about, then the first thing the Jews would have to do would be to demonstrate the right treatment of the stranger in their gates, in whose shoes they themselves have stood for 2,000 years. We cannot here summarize his further suggestions,

and we want rather to call attention to the spirit in which the whole problem is discussed. We are familiar enough in our own history with people who seem to be able to see only the shortcomings of British policy and administration and to find some kind of satisfaction in blackening their own country. Between Dr. Zander and this type of mind there is no affinity whatever. He is a devoted adherent to the Jewish cause. "If war," he says, "in fact were the issue, I feel it has to be admitted that rarely in human history have conquerors been driven by greater need than the Jews." But devotion to his cause means for him an equal devotion to the higher claims of truth. No one who has read Sir Norman Angell's *The Steep Places*¹ can doubt the urgent need of the recovery of this larger and loftier outlook, if humanity is to escape the fate of the Gadarene swine. Dr. Zander has set a signal example. He has been able to do it, because he is possessed by a profound conviction that "self-righteousness leads to isolation and despair about the alleged injustice of the world. But recognition of guilt releases the greatest creative forces and builds communities".

THE SUPPLEMENT

Alec Robertson is probably well known to many of our readers, as he is to a large public in the country, for his broadcast talks on music. Since the death of Sir Walford Davies, no man has done more to combine sound scholarship with lucidity and charm in making music interesting and pleasurable to thousands of people with no specialized knowledge or skill in music. Mr. Robertson is a well-known reviewer on many kinds of music in music and gramophone journals, but his chief personal interest is in church music, particularly plainsong on which he has published an important book. A series of six talks on plainsong, planned and in part given by him, has just come to an end in the Third Programme. A year ago the Student Christian Movement Religious Book Club published a small book by him called *Contrasts: The Arts and Religion*.²

Kathleen Bliss

Hamish Hamilton, 8s. 6d.

² S.C.M. Press, 6s.

THE APPEAL OF BACH'S "ST. MATTHEW PASSION"

By ALEC ROBERTSON

It was on Good Friday of the year 1729 that Bach had his masterpiece first sung in St. Thomas's, Leipzig, and there is evidence that some, at least, of the congregation were disturbed by the unusually dramatic character of the work. So little was it regarded that the "St. Matthew Passion" was consigned, after Bach's death, to a hundred years of oblivion, and might have slumbered still longer had not a young musician, then only fourteen years old, come into possession of a score of the work, jealously guarded by the chorus master of the Singakademie, in Berlin. This young musician, whose name was Mendelssohn, brought the work to performance on March 11th, 1829, the year of its centenary.

ON Passion Sunday of this year, at the Royal Albert Hall, Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" was sung to an audience which filled every inch of the available space, and an audience which followed with earnest and devoted attention a performance lasting, with a long interval, nearly five hours. It has been sung, in whole or in part, in many other places and has received as in other years the same earnest attention. The performance of the "St. Matthew Passion" by the Bach Choir in the Albert Hall was broadcast complete in the Home Service and thus many thousands were added to those listening in the Albert Hall, a huge unseen audience that must have included many of the younger generation, hearing the work for the first time. It is odd that those who are so ready to criticise the B.B.C. for not giving sufficient time to religious broadcasting do not seem to notice major events of this kind. Is the reason, perhaps, that they have too narrow a conception of what constitutes religious broadcasting?

This year the "St. John Passion", the "Mass in B. Minor", and a programme of Cantatas and Motets were also given by the London Bach Choir. Some weeks before the Festival began it was almost impossible to get a ticket for any of these events. What is the significance of this

religious pilgrimage, as we might call it, to the shrine of J. S. Bach?

It would not be true to say that the "St. Matthew Passion", on which I particularly want to dwell, is an English institution as is Handel's "Messiah". The average audience which goes to hear "Messiah" knows most of the music by heart and many will have sung it elsewhere. In a recent, and excellent, little book on the work Julian Herbage writes:—

"One might almost say that it has become part of our religion, for to many it is the sublime expression of the essence of Christian belief. We can find support and consolation from it for our every spiritual mood. The very fact that, unlike other Passion music, the actual person of our Saviour is never represented, gives it a universality which no similar sacred work possesses. This universality raises 'Messiah' above all narrowness or sectarianism."¹

This is not the place to enter into prolonged controversy with the author of that sentence, but the omission of the central figure, and of the minor figures, from "Messiah" lends support to the view, which I have always held, that Handel's oratorio is a great humanitarian work rather than a great religious one. It is, in a way, an epitome of the Englishman's dislike for discussion about his religious beliefs, his preference for feeling rather than thought, his embarrassment, also, at what he feels, in various religious communions, as a too great intensity of personal feeling, too conspicuously displayed. I am not sure what Mr. Herbage means by "narrowness or sectarianism", though I have a strong suspicion that he would include dogma under these headings, but I do not think so intelligent a musician would be able to find in the Lutheran Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" (or, for that matter, in the Catholic Vittoria's Passion Music) anything which, in the denigratory sense, could be called narrow or sectarian.

What could be more universal in its appeal than the great opening chorus of the "St. Matthew Passion". Bach

¹ "Messiah" by Julian Herbage. (World of Music Series, 6s. Max Parrish and Co., Ltd.)

depicts the Man of Sorrows bearing His heavy Cross, and all our sins, to Calvary. "Come, ye daughters, share my weeping," says Zion who, with them, awaits the sad procession in the distance. But the most remarkable thing about Bach's masterpiece is that it is suffused with *personal* grief. After the disciples have fearfully questioned the Saviour, "Lord, is it I, is it I?" at the Last Supper, Bach immediately follows their words with the chorale, "'Tis I, whose sin hath bound Thee," and we feel that he identifies himself, as well as us, with the text. Even more striking is the long, lamenting phrase given in the "St. John Passion" to the word "wept", when Peter went out and wept bitterly; and though the word is given a shorter phrase in the later work, it still carries the same personal and intensely moving quality. The arias are all deeply meditative in character, and is there any music that touches the heart so profoundly, and is so grief-laden, as the *arioso*, "Ah, Golgotha, unhappy Golgotha", for contralto, or that is so loving in its pathos as the *arioso* for bass, "'Twas in the cool of eventide," which pictures Joseph of Arimathea begging the body of the Saviour for burial? And how characteristic it is of Bach's superb musical imagination to use a solemn dance measure—a Sarabande—as he so often does in his Church Cantatas for deeply devotional events, in the exquisite final chorus: "We bow our heads," in which we take our leave of the Saviour, now peacefully slumbering in His tomb.

It is not my purpose to describe the Passion in detail, but it is noteworthy that the words of our Lord are in the "Matthew", but not in the "John" Passion, always accompanied by the strings, alone and not, as are the other recitatives, by the *continuo*. The effect is to put a nimbus round the head of the Saviour, as did the mediaeval painters. But when our Lord utters the great cry of desolation from the Cross, Bach withdraws the nimbus and the organ only accompanies His words. Such imaginative insight could only have come from a complete identification with the scene of the Crucifixion.

We feel, as we listen, that Bach is living through, not only this last but every moment of the tragic drama, and

relating it to himself, and yet this subjective attitude is expressed with such greatness of spirit and in music of such sublime beauty that the whole work takes on universality in a much more vital and Christian sense than in "Messiah".

How much of this is perceived by the audience which throngs to hear the work I do not know. We can discount the idle few who go to hear Bach's music just because a great many other people do so, we can safely leave to their reward those who have made a deep study of the work, and turn our attention to the average member of the audience (in so far as any such persons exist !). Many of those with whom I have spoken tell me that they find in such performances, apart from the greatness of the work itself, a seriousness of purpose, a sense of dedication and devotion, which are far to seek in the church choirs with which they are acquainted. Petty vanity, frivolity of outlook, carelessness in performance, an unworthy choice of music, have even led some of them to forsake the services of the Church entirely. This, of course, shows that the seed of the Christian religion has fallen on shallow ground, for one does not go to church for the sake of the music. It cannot, however, be disregarded that in these days when the radio and the gramophone record often provide a high standard of performance in sacred music, people will be extremely, and no doubt sometimes unfairly, critical of what they hear in church. The remedy is not to attract them back to church by a kind of high-class concert, not to give them anything of the kind that made Voltaire call a High Mass "the opera of the people", but to have the music that is performed, however simple or however complex it may be, performed in the spirit of the words Bach so often put on his manuscripts, "for the greater glory of God". The performance of the "St. Matthew Passion" is, of course, an event for which the choirs concerned have been working for a long period, not for profit, for their work is voluntary, but with that sense of dedication and devotion of which I have spoken : but, in spite of all that has been said, by way of excuse, about the deadening effect of ecclesiastical routine if a body of singers cannot be found ready to devote their

best efforts to the music of their church, and if the church will not make the profession of organist and choirmaster reasonably remunerative, if the clergy show little interest in the liturgy, then there will be an end of words about church music as sacred art. The "Motu Proprio" of Pius X, which is a magnificent expression of the ideals that church music should serve, has been so consistently ignored by a large number of the clergy of my communion that the few who do loyally and faithfully observe it shine with an almost unnatural splendour. (Even in Rome itself it is (or was) not unusual to find in a Requiem Mass, when the use of the organ is prohibited, the organist entertaining the corpse with Rossini-like scamperings up and down the keyboard!)

If God is not mocked neither are the people deceived. Compromise has been the deadly poison of Christianity and the lack of it the strength of Communism. The thousands who hear the "St. Matthew Passion" realize instinctively, or in fact, that only the best is good enough for this sublime theme; and those who never darken the doors of a church, and are avowed enemies of the Christian way of life, are yet irresistibly drawn to the great sacred drama, and I think they receive from it more than aesthetic satisfaction. The spirit of self-sacrifice and of brotherhood evoked by Bach's settings of the Passions makes, as some of them have told me, a deep appeal to the young men and women who, whatever one thinks of their political beliefs, are not lacking in these qualities. They recognize at once the deep sincerity, the utter integrity that has gone to the fashioning of every phrase, every note in these two Passions, and which is to be found in all of Bach's religious music. They notice the avoidance of any theatrical appeal, of Bach's refusal, even though it may sometimes lay a considerable burden on the listener, to divert his gaze from Christ, the inspiring force of his genius, and the object of his deepest love. No great musical work conveys these virtues so pre-eminently to us, so sublimely, as does the "St. Matthew Passion". In the mountain ranges of great sacred music it is not only the highest peak, but also the most accessible. Bach had no

thoughts of the world conferring such immortality as it can give on his masterpiece, or even that he had written a masterpiece. He simply put whole-heartedly and devotedly all the resources of his immense and completely matured genius, perfected by incessant labour, at the service of the theme which, above all, stirred his soul and heart and mind. And this single-mindedness calls forth the respect of even those to whom that theme has no mystical meaning. I can imagine, bearing all this in mind, that a Communist might well leave the "St. Matthew Passion" inspired with greater fervour for his work than a Christian.

The Christian may well, indeed certainly does, find inspiration and consolation in listening to the work, but he may be in danger of taking it all for granted. He is of the household of the faith, he knows it all, and from his established place can gaze with complacency on the outsiders whose enthusiasm he may suspect and may react against. His may remain a passive attendance (these great audiences should be trained to sing the chorales with the chorus) which will be followed by no action: or will he leave the church or concert hall not only deeply moved by the sufferings of Christ, but as deeply identified with the great chorus with which the first part concludes, "O man, thy heavy sin lament"? The chorale theme which runs like a thread of gold through this tremendous chorus tells us that Christ's death gained us our pardon, and Bach's sense of unworthiness at this manifestation of God's love for us fills every bar. In these days people dislike calling themselves "miserable sinners", and the unctuous mouthing of the phrase has no doubt done much to cause it to be disparaged; but this chorus, and indeed the whole work, puts the ashes on our heads and the sackcloth on our limbs which our own complacent appearance successfully conceals. Attendance at the "St. Matthew Passion" will by the generous listener be felt to be not only an act of devotion "embroidered with tears", but a challenge to action which should be accepted without delay.

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